

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Algonquin, 1934

WPG-75



The cutter *Algonquin* was named for one of the most populous and widespread North American Native groups, with tribes originally numbering in the hundreds and speaking several related dialects. They inhabited most of the Canadian region south of Hudson Bay between the Rockies and the Atlantic Ocean and, bypassing select territories held by the Sioux and Iroquois, the latter of whom had driven them out of their territory along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Builder: Pusey & Jones Company, Wilmington, DE

Length: 165'

Beam: 36'

Draft: 12' 3" mean

Displacement: 1,005 tons

Cost: \$499,800

Launched: 25 July 1934

Commissioned: 20 October 1934

Decommissioned: 18 April 1947

Disposition: Sold, 13 July 1948

Propulsion/Machinery:

Main Engines: 1 x Westinghouse double-reduction geared turbine; 1,500 shp
Main Boilers: 2 x Foster-Wheeler; 310 psi, 200° superheat
Propellers: 1 x four-bladed

Performance/Endurance:

Maximum Speed: 12.8 knots; 1,350 mile range
Economic: 9.4 knots; 5,079 mile range

Fuel Oil: 41,500 gallons

Complement: 6 officers, 56 men (1934)

Armament:

1934: 2 x 3"/50; 2 x 6-pounders
1942: 2 x 3"/50; 2 x 20mm/80 (single mount); 2 x depth charge tracks; 4 x "Y" guns;
(carried 14 depth charges total)
2 mousetraps.

Electronics:

Radar: SF (1945)
Sonar: QCL-2 (1945)

Class History:

The 165-foot "A" class cutters were based on the 1915 *Tallapoosa/Ossipee* design. They were designed for light ice-breaking as well, and were constructed with a reinforced belt at the waterline and a cutaway forefoot. They could break up to two feet of ice. They were also the first cutters with geared turbine drives. They were constructed utilizing Public Works Administration construction allotments, as part of a program established to help "pump" money into the economy after the onset of the Great Depression.

Cutter History:

The cruising cutter *Algonquin*, built for the Coast Guard by Pusey & Jones Company of Wilmington, Delaware, was commissioned on 20 October 1934. She was originally homeported at Woods Hole, Massachusetts where she served out of until 1937. From 1937 through 1940 she was base out of Portland, Maine and was used extensively for light ice-breaking in the Hudson River and along the coast of Maine. In fact, soon after entering service, she cleared a channel through the ice on the Hudson River as far up as Albany. Then, on the night of 14 December, she answered an "SOS" from the American schooner *Alvona*, which, during strong winds and a heavy sea, had its sails carried away off the Pollock Rip light vessel. The crew of eight was struggling to save the \$10,000 vessel which was carrying a cargo of lumber valued at \$40,000, when the *Algonquin* arrived and towed her to safety.

She was transferred to the Navy in July 1941 and was assigned, throughout the war, to CINCLANT (DESLANT) [Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, Destroyer Command, Atlantic]. Her homeport remained Portland and she was used to escort convoys to and from Greenland waters.

Some of her more notable experiences follow:

On 16 March 1943, her crew recovered the remains of the eleven crewmen from a Navy PBY-5 that crashed north of Ivigtut. Proceeding to Narsarssuak on 20 March, *Algonquin* got underway proceeding to the aid of the SS *Svend Foyne*, which had struck an iceberg near Cape Farwell. On 21 March at 0018 her crew sighted lights of HMS *Hastings*, CGCs *Frederick Lee*, *Aivik*, and SS *Svend Foyne* and received visual signal from *Hastings* asking *Algonquin* to pick up survivors.

She picked up 15 men in a lifeboat and three bodies. The *Svend Foyn* sank at 0405 approximately 3,500 yards ahead of *Algonquin* and at 0415 the cutter picked up seven men from a lifeboat. At 0920 she proceeded to Cape Farwell with the other Coast Guard vessels, and transferred the 22 survivors to the cutter *Modoc*.

On 19 May 1943 she sailed from Casco Bay to Argentia, escorting two sections of *YFD-25* in tow with three other escorts. She arrived at Argentia on the 24th and was underway on the 30th, escorting convoy SG-25 with the cutters *Mojave* and *Tampa*. She anchored at Kungnat Bay 2 June 1943, and proceeded to Narsarssuak on the 5th. On the 11th she was en route investigating a reported periscope that was apparently sighted in Skov Fjord. On the 12th she encountered heavy fog and ice while searching for convoy GS-24 and after sighting it took position with four other escorts to the four vessels. On 13 June 1943, at 0509 a lookout reported a cloud of smoke from her sister cutter *Escanaba*, and two minutes later *Escanaba* sank beneath the waves. At 0523 wreckage was reported by the cutter *Storis* and the *Algonquin* covered the cutter *Raritan* as she engaged in picking up the two survivors from *Escanaba*. The cause of the *Escanaba*'s sinking was never determined. *Algonquin* then proceeded on to Halifax and then to Argentia. She continued escorting convoys through January 1944.

On 2 February 1944, the *Algonquin* stood out of Boston for Casco Bay, Maine, and fourteen days of training exercises. She proceeded to Argentia with the cutter *Tahoma* and she departed for Narsarssuak on the 23rd, arriving there on the 27th. *Algonquin* was then engaged in ice breaking in the Skov Fjord throughout March, 1944. At the end of the month an inspection showed that all four propeller blades were bent and she was docked until 16 April awaiting the arrival of a new propeller. On the 24th she proceeded to Gronne Dal where she moored until 1 May 1944. On 1 May 1944, the *Algonquin*, in company with the cutter *Northland* and three sub-chasers, proceeded toward Argentia, encountering ice fields and icebergs en route. Here on 10 May she entered dry-dock where her damaged propeller was removed and replaced. She then proceeded on the 14th for Boston, arriving on the 17th for availability until 30 May 1944. During the rest of 1944, she was on weather patrol duties, relieving the cutters *Mohawk*, *Modoc*, *Comanche*, and *Tahoma* periodically on weather stations "Charlie" and "Able."

Weather patrol duties of *Algonquin* continued during 1945, alternating with the *Tahoma* and *Comanche* on Weather Station #1. During the first half of March she was in dry-dock at Portsmouth and from then until 17 April she was on training exercises at Casco Bay. On 18 April 1945 she dropped a full pattern of depth charges on a target off Boston, while en route to Greenland to assume weather patrol duties. Beginning in July 1945, weather patrol duties were succeeded by local escort duties in Greenland. The end of the war on 14 August 1945 found the *Algonquin* en route to Boston to prepare for peace-time duties.

With the peace-time demobilization of the Coast Guard, many cutters were decommissioned due to a lack of personnel to man them and the 165(A)-Class cutters were considered as prime candidates. These cutters were also determined to be relatively unsuited for work outside of the Great Lakes. Consequently, they were declared surplus to the needs of the Coast Guard. *Algonquin* was decommissioned on 18 April 1947 and sold on 13 July 1948 to the Patapsco Scrap Corporation of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Photographs:



USS *Algonquin*, CG; "Coast Guard Cutter ALGONQUIN on trial trip in Delaware River."; 3 October 1934; Photo No. 10-03-34(3); photographer unknown.



USS *Algonquin*, CG; no caption; circa 1937; Photo No. 9303712; photographer unknown.



Algonquin; no caption; 4 October 1934; no photo number; photographer unknown.

Probably another of the series of photographs taken during her trials on the Delaware River in October, 1934.



Algonquin (WPG-75); "COAST GUARD CUTTER LOOKING FOR A FIGHT: Doughty warrior of the North Atlantic is this U.S. Coast Guard combat cutter. These sturdy Coast Guard fighting ships have played a leading role in making Allied shipping lanes safe for the armadas of supply craft."; no date (circa 1943); Photo No. 4287.

Algonquin in her early-war camouflage after having her additional armament installed.

Sources:

The Coast Guard at War V: Transports and Escorts. Part I [Escorts] (Washington, DC: U.S. Coast Guard, 1 March 1949), pp. 56-59.

Hobelman, D. E. "Escanaba, Coast Guard Cutter." *The Yachtsman* (June, 1935), pp. 7-8, 16.

"The New Coast Guard Cutters." *Marine Engineering and Shipping Review* 40 (1935), pp. 130-133.

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 21-24.

